

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 971

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB PINT DA

SUBJ: DANISH TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP SCORES IMPRESSIVE

SUCCESS AT QUADRENNIAL CONGRESS

SUMMARY: THE RECENT CONGRESS OF THE DANISH TRADE UNION
FEDERATION LO) REPRESENTED AN IMPORTANT SUCCESS FOR THE FEDERA-
TION LEADERSHIP AND, IN PARTICULAR, FOR LO PRESIDENT THOMAS
NIELSEN. UNDER HEAVY ATTACK DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS BY THE
COMMUNIST MINORITY IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT, NIELSEN AND THE
LO LEADERSHIP DEFENDED EFFECTIVELY THEIR PAST POLICIES AND
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IMPRESSIVE ACHIEVEMENTS, SECURED REELECTION OF ALL INCUMBENT

OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS, PUSHED THROUGH TWO IMPORTANT MEASURES OVER SUBSTANTIAL OPPOSITION AND SET THE DANISH LABOR MOVEMENT ON A NEW COURSE FOR THE COMING FOUR-YEAR PERIOD. THIS COURSE WILL SHIFT LO'S GOALS FROM FURTHER WAGE INCREASES TO SYSTEMATIC REFORMS INCLUDING "ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY".
END SUMMARY.

1) CONGRESSES OF THE DANISH TRADE UNION FEDERATION (LO) ARE OFTEN UNPREDICTABLE AFFAIRS; EVERY FOUR YEARS THE LO IS DIS-ASSEMBLED, THE CONTENDING INTERNAL FORCES ARE RE-WEIGHTED AND THE ORGANIZATION THEN RESTRUCTURED, SOMETIMES IN DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT FORM. WITH THE DIVISIVE EC CAMPAIGN OF 1972 AND AN OPEN CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY AND THE COMMUNIST MINORITY WITHIN THE LO BEING THE DOMINANT EVENTS OF THE JUST-COMPLETED FOUR-YEAR PERIOD, THE CONGRESS AT AALBORG MAY 12-16 SHAPED UP AS AN ESPECIALLY UNPREDICATBLE AND POSSIBLY WORRISOME EVENT. IN ACTUALITY, IT TURNED OUT TO BE A SIGNIFICANT VICTORY FOR THE CURRENT LO LEADERSHIP AND A PERSONAL SUCESS FUL NIELSEN.

2) IN ITS FAVOR, THE LO LEADERSHIP HAD AN IMPRESSIVE LIST OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND NIELSEN, IN HIS TWO HOUR REPORT TO THE CONGRESS, UNDERSCORED THEM ALL: EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN, THE FOUR-WEEK VACATION, THE 40-HOUR WORK WEEKS, AN EMPLOYER-FINANCED EDUCATION FUND, WORKER REPRESENTATION ON CORPORATE BOARDS, AND A REFORM OF THE SICK PAY COMPENSATION SYSTEM. A "STATUS REPORT" PRESENTED TO THE CONGRESS, MOREOVER, INDICATED THAT OVER THE PAST 12 YEARS DANISH WORKERS HAVE NOT ONLY KEPT ABREAST OF INFLATION BUT INCREASED THEIR SLICE OF THE TOTAL GNP PIE. REAL WAGES INCREASED ON AN AVERAGE OF 3.2 PER CENT PER YEAR DURING THIS PERIOD; DISPOSABLE REAL WAGES BY 1.3 PER CENT PER YEAR.

3) COMMUNIST AND SOCIAST PEOPLES PARTY (SPP) DELEGATES ATTACKED THE LO LEADERSHIP'S POLICES ON SEVERAL ISSUES: EC MEMBERSHIP, ATTITUDE TOWARD MULTI-NATIONALS, PASSIVITY IN THE FACE OF RISING UNEMPLOYMENT, AND LO CONCURRENCE IN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT'S INTERVENTION TO SOLVE THE WAGE NEGOTIATION STALEMATE THIS SPRING. THE LAST OF THESE WAS THE MOST DANGEROUS ANFPRIME MINISTER ANKER JORGENSEN WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PERSONALLY PRESENT TO LEAD THE DEFENSE. JORGENSEN AND NIELSEN'S ARGUEMENT THAT FAILURE TO INTERVENE WOULD HAVE LED TO A MAJOR LABOR CONFLICT, PERHAPS A GENERAL STRIKE, FOR WHICH UNION STRIKE FUNDS WERE UNSUFFICIENT, WAS CONVINCING AND IN THE END ONLY 18 VOTES WERE REGISTERED AS OPPOSING THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

4) IN THE SUBSEQUENT ELECTIONS, NIELSEN AND ALL INCUMBENT LO

OFFICERS WERE REELECTED. THE 16-MAN EXECUTIVE BOARD WAS ALSO REELECTED WITH ONLY ONE CHANGE - THE RETIRING SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN OF THE MEATCUTTERS UNION WAS SUCCEEDED BY ANOTHER SOCIAL DEMOCRAT. A MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF THE COMMUNIST AND SPP OPPOSITION WAS TO PLACE ONE COMMUNIST ON THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, IN ORDER TO GIVE HIM A "PLATFORM" POSITION TO SPEAK FOR THEM. THE COMBINED OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, WAS ABLE TO MUSTER ONLY 100-125 VOTES OUT OF 994 VOTING DELEGATES FOR THEIR THREE CANDIDATES; HARRY OSBORN OF THE MASON JORGENSEN OF THE METALWORKERS UNION, AND PREBEN MOLLER HANSEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE SEAMEN'S UNION THEY CAME IN RESPECTIVELY 19TH 20TH AND 21ST ON THE LIST WHICH ELECTED 16. DESPITE THEIR ACTIVE CAMPAIGN DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS FOR POWER WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT, THE COMMUNISTS AND SPP THUS MANAGED TO DO NO BETTER THAN AT THE 1971 CONGRESS.

5) IN ITS TWO MAJOR ACTIONS, THE CONGRESS VOTED TO INCREASE MEMBERS' DUES SUBSTANTIALLY OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS TO FINANCE A 20 MILLION KRONER (3.9 MILLION DOLLAR) SUBSIDY TO THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRESS. (THE THREE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PAPERS ARE OWNED BY THE LO AND, BECAUSE OF LACK OF ADVERTISING, RUN A GREATER CHRONIC DEFICIT THAN MOST OF THE BOURGEOIS PRESS WHICH IS ALSO IN FINANCIAL TROUBLE.) SECONDLY, BY A NARROW 50-VOTE MAJORITY, THE CONGRESS EMPOWERED THE LO EXECUTIVE BOARD TO SELECT AND PAY ADVISORS TO WORK WITH THE PROVINCIAL TRADES COUNCILS. THIS MEASURE WAS INTENDED TO INCREASE LO HEADQUARTERS CONTACT WITH THE GRASS ROOTS OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND TO COUNTER INCREASING COMMUNIST INFLUENCE AMONG THESE LOCAL TRADES COUNCILS.

6) WHILE THUS SUCCESSFULLY CONTAINING THE INTERNAL COMMUNIST THREAT, THE ANTI-TAX PROTEST MOVEMENT IN DENMARK SYMBOLIZED ESPECIALLY BY MOGENS GLISTRUP'S PROGRESS PARTY. RECOGNIZING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT THE WIDESPREAD ANTI-TAX ATTITUDES IN DENMARK SPELLED THE END OF FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM - THE LO'S TRADITIONAL OBJECTIVE - THE CONGRESS APPROVED A BASIC SHIFT OF COURSE FOR THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN DENMARK. NIELSEN INFORMED THE CONGRESS THAT THE POSSIBILITY FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN WAGES AND BENEFITS IN THE LAST HALF OF THE 70'S WOULD BE MUCH NARROWER THAN IN THE PAST 12 YEARS.

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 291650Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 972

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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AS A CONSEQUENCE, HE SAID, THE
LABOR MOVEMENT MUST SET ITS SIGHTS ON OBJECTIVES OF A VERY
DIFFERENT CHARACTER: REFORM OF THE TAX SYSTEM; IMPROVEMENT
IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE AT THE WORK PLACE; AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY,
ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY. IN THIS CONNECTION, A COMMITTEE REPORT
ON REFORM AND RATIONALIZATION OF THE TAX SYSTEM WAS PRESENTED
FOR FUTURE DEBATE AND A FILM ON ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY WAS
UNVEILED. THE FILM, WHICH IS STRONGLY ANTI-MULTI-NATIONAL
CORPORATION (MNC), WILL BE WIDELY SHOWN DURING THE COMING
MONTHS AS PART OF THE CAMPAIGN THE LO IS MOUNTING IN FAVOR
OF ITS ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY PROPOSAL.

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7) FOREIGN AFFAIRS PLAYED A RELATIVELY MINOR ROLE IN THE

CONGRESS. AMONG THE MOST PROMINENT OF THE FOREIGN GUESTS WERE ICFTU PRESIDENT DONALD MACDNALD, ALFRED STOER OF THE AUSTRIAN DGB, AND MARY PATTERSSON OF THE TUC. THE CONGRESS STATEMENT ON FOREIGN AFFIAIS CALLED FOR "CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE OPPRESSED PEOPLES OF CHILE, SPAIN AND SOUTH AFRICA", MENTIONED PORTUGAL AND SOUTH VIETNAM AIN UNOBJECTIONABLE LANGUAGE AND REITERATED THE INCREASINGLY STRONG ANTIPATHY TO MCNS. "THE LABOR MOVEMENT VIEWS WITH CONCERN THE MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATION'S INCREASING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POWER. WE SUPPORT EFFORTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION TO OBTAIN RULES WHICH SET LIMITS TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE MULTI-NATIONAL COPRORATIONS."

8) COMMENT: AS CAN BE EXPECTED, THE LO LEADERSHIP IS VASTLY RELIEVED AND SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME. THOMAS NIELSEN HAS NEVER BEEN STRONGER THAN AT PRESENT.
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